In the Infirmity

I dread the day I get the hospital call. It’s all planned out

the plane I’ll take, the seats I’ll book, I will be there by morning with pumping heart

disrespectful loud, an insult

to your sputtering.

See what I bring, my sapling arms to mold themselves

into your wheelchair— and airport chocolates, the kind

you’ve never liked. Look at me.

I am pulling out my vertebrae to prop up your spine, I am regurgitating air into your lungs

like a swallow to a hatching, how the roles reverse:

this is what the poet called the

second childishness, seventh act

and we’ve forgot our lines. Roll back the tape.

I think you’d like me better if I left, but I am made

of mud and clay and runoff wet, your own little patch

of England

the bacteria in my bloodstream remember the press of your hands.

I think if I liked you better, I’d resent you more—

so let’s standstill like this,

and I will be the flag and you the colonizer

and I will be the pot and you the kettle

and I will be the bark and you the tree: I am hardening my skin to keep you warm.